

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for distributing program content in a network, said network
2 comprising a server for providing said program content, a client operable for communicating
3 with said server across said network, and a caching server operable for storing a copy of said
4 program content, said method comprising:

5 establishing a rule defining whether said client is entitled to receive
6 said program content;

7 storing said rule on said network;

allowing said client to request said program content from said network;

9 comparing said rule to a record describing at least one entitlement
10 characteristic of said client so as to determine whether said client is entitled to receive said
11 program content before distributing a key to said client for decrypting said program content;
12 and

multicasting said program content.

2. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a method of payment.

3. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a
2 subscription identifier.

4. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a restriction based on the location of where said program content is to be delivered.

5. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said rule is comprised of a
restriction based on a content rating for a user.

1 6. The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one

2 entitlement characteristic comprises information indicating a physical location of said client.

1 7. The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one

2 entitlement characteristic comprises information indicating at least one service subscribed to
3 by said client.

1 8. The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one
2 entitlement characteristic comprises data for use in authenticating said client with said
3 caching server.

1 9. The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one
2 entitlement characteristic is stored by said client in a ticket.

1 10. The method as described in claim 1, wherein said at least one
2 entitlement characteristic is communicated from said client to said caching server.

1 11. The method as described in claim 1 and further comprising not
2 permitting said client to alter said at least one entitlement characteristic.

1 12. The method as described in claim 1 and further comprising encrypting
2 said at least one entitlement characteristic so as to prevent said client from altering said at
3 least one entitlement characteristic.

1 13. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said multicasting said
2 program content is begun before said comparing said rule to said record describing said at
3 least one entitlement characteristic of said client.

1 14. A method for distributing program content in a network, said network
2 comprising a server for storing program content, a client operable for communicating with
3 said server across said network, and a caching server operable for storing a copy of said
4 program content, said method comprising:

5 establishing a rule defining whether said client is entitled to receive
6 said program content;

7 allowing said client to request said program content from said server;

8 receiving at said server a request from said client for said program
9 content; and

10 formatting a data record comprising an identifier to identify said
11 program content and said rule for said program content.

1 15. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

2 authenticating said data record.

1 16. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

2 signing said data record so as to allow said caching server to

3 authenticate said data record.

1 17. The method as described in claim 16 wherein said authenticating said

2 data record comprises:

3 utilizing a trusted third party to provide an authentication key to said

4 server for use in signing said data record and a verification key to said caching server for use

5 in authenticating said data record.

18. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

conveying said data record to said client.

19. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

signing said data record; and

conveying said signed data record to said client.

20. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

signing said data record;

conveying said signed data record to said client; and

conveying said signed data record to said caching server from said

client.

21. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

signing said data record; and

conveying said signed data record to said caching server from said

server.

22. The method as described in claim 14 and further comprising:

2 signing said data record;
3 conveying said signed data record to said client;
4 conveying said signed data record to said caching server from said
5 client;
6 conveying an identifier identifying said program content from said
7 client to said caching server;
8 authenticating said data record at said caching server;
9 allowing said caching server to determine whether said client is
10 entitled to receive said program content.

receiving a data record for said client for use in determining whether
said client is entitled to said program content;

receiving a rule associated with said program content for use by said caching server so as to determine whether said client is entitled to said program content;

utilizing said data record and said rule so as to determine whether said client is entitled to said program content; and

multicasting said program content.

1 24. The method as described in claim 23 and further comprising:

2 conveying said program material to said client.

1 25. The method as described in claim 23 and further comprising:

1 26. The method as described in claim 23 wherein said receiving said data
2 record for said client comprises:

3 receiving said data record from said client.

4